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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/18/2017

TAGS: PREL PGOV EPET EK GB

SUBJECT: GABON REACTS TO EQUATORIAL GUINEAN ACCUSATIONS ON BORDER DISPUTE

REF: A. 2006 LIBREVILLE 580  
1B. 2006 LIBREVILLE 598  
1C. 2006 LIBREVILLE 627  
1D. MALABO 40

Classified By: DCM Katherine Dhanani. Reason: 1.4 (b) & (d).

11. (U) On April 16 the GoG publicly responded to GREG accusations that the Gabonese have obstructed the UN mediation effort on the Gabon-EG border dispute. Para 3 contains an informal translation of the Gabonese statement.

12. (C) During an April 12 meeting with Ambassador, Vice Prime Minister/ Minister of Foreign Affairs Jean Ping complained about the GREG's public posturing, noting that the Gabonese government "prefers not to conduct diplomacy by megaphone." MFA legal advisor Michel Biang, the author of the Gabonese response, told DCM on April 18 that the GoG was downplaying the matter publicly to avoid "throwing fuel on the fire." ForMin Ping has been called to brief the National Assembly on the status of the border dispute on Monday, April 23. Biang said that in his view Gabon has exhausted the UN mediation efforts, as well as efforts by other parties, including the Cameroonian attorney (Ref A) and the King of Morocco. Biang noted that President Bongo called publicly for recourse to the ICJ in October when the Geneva meeting was canceled. In contrast with reports in Malabo (Ref D), Biang thinks the GoG has made its preference clear, but, he said, the GoG is concerned that the GREG has not agreed to submit the dispute to the ICJ.

13. (U) Text of Gabonese statement:

Following the statements of the EG Foreign Minister before the EG Parliament meeting in Bata on April 10, in which he accused Gabon of blocking the settlement of the territorial dispute between Gabon and EG, the Gabonese government is astonished and indignant by these irresponsible and untrue remarks.

The Gabonese government emphasizes that it undertook in good faith to find a peaceful solution to the dispute with its neighbor by accepting the mediation of the UNSG, despite the existence of a legal texts clearly granting Gabon sovereignty over the islands at issue.

Gabon's good faith was evident and remarkable in its participation in all the meetings called by the mediator as well as its responsiveness to all the mediator's requests, contrary to the unfounded accusations of the EG Foreign

Minister.

Gabon has spared no effort to foster a climate of peace and serenity both domestically and internationally in order to give the UNSG's mediation every opportunity to succeed.

End text.

¶4. (C) Comment: Gabon now appears intent on submitting the dispute to the ICJ, unless a new and promising mediation opportunity appears. The potential for a politically-palatable diplomatic compromise has been all but destroyed by public controversy in Gabon.

WALKLEY